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Chicora Foundation, Inc.

Memo

To: Mr. John Parker
From: Michael Trinkley
CC:
Date: November 11, 2009
Re: Mansfield Plantation African American cemetery

I visited the Mansfield Plantation African American cemetery on November 9, 2009 at the request of Mr. John Parker. The purpose of my visit was to briefly examine the cemetery, its context, setting, and overall condition in order to provide long-term preservation recommendations. I was met on-site by the plantation's caretaker, Mr. Cliff Ford. Mr. Ford showed me the location of the cemetery. While he has been associated with the plantation for only about four years, he commented that his

brother, Lee Adam Ford, when a sheriff's deputy had escorted cemetery processions to the graveyard and had been in attendance during several funerals. He also believed that Ms. Martha Reed of Georgetown had participated in several funerals at this cemetery.

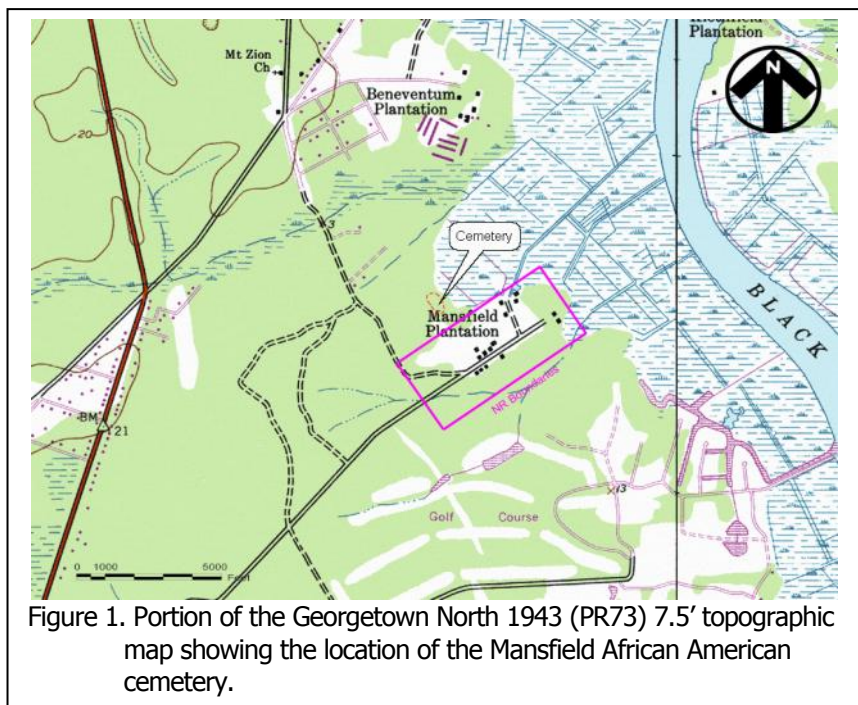


Figure 1. Portion of the Georgetown North 1943 (PR73) 7.5' topographic map showing the location of the Mansfield African American cemetery.

The cemetery is situated about 1,000 feet north of the oak avenue to the Mansfield main settlement and about that same distance from the slave

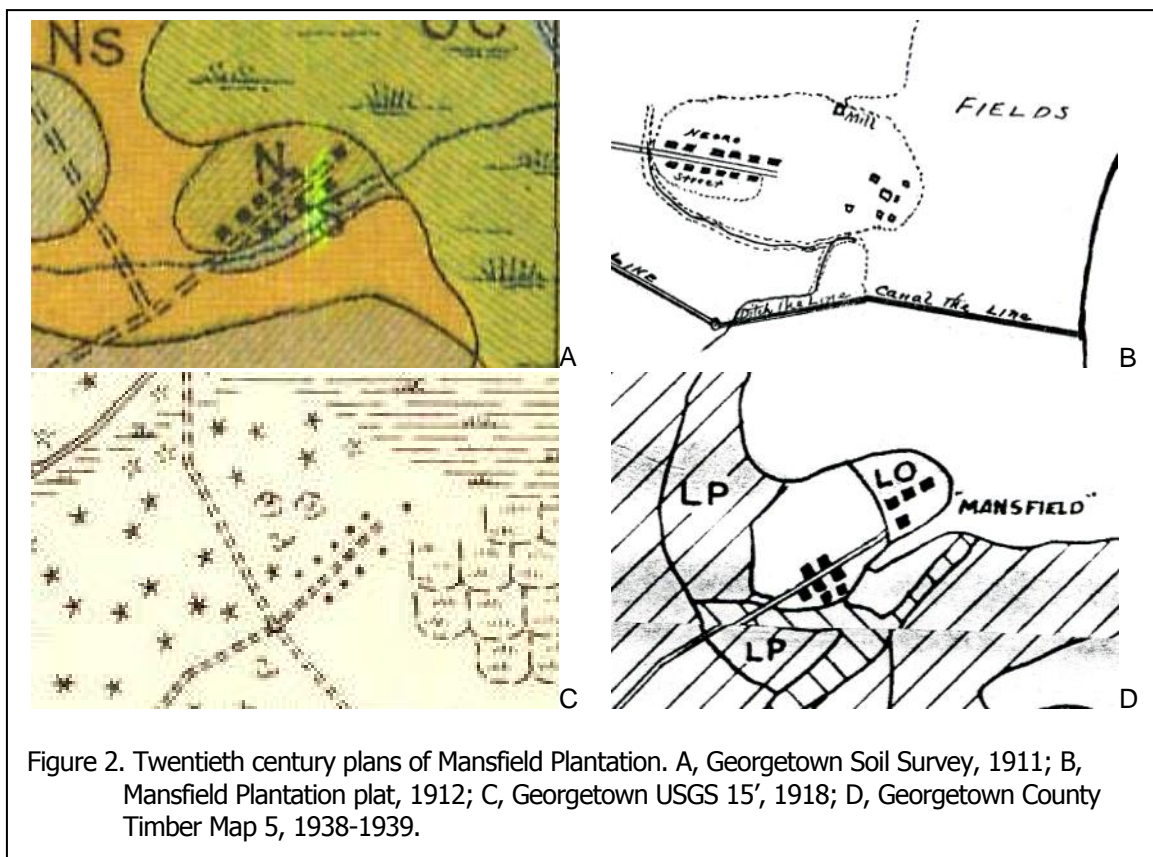
settlement along this avenue (Figure 1). The cemetery is found on the northeast side of a dirt road on a sandy rise extending along the adjacent rice fields for about 180 feet.

The cemetery is situated outside the boundaries of the National Register boundaries for Mansfield Plantation and is not mentioned in the National Register nomination form.

Plantation History

Mansfield Plantation was placed on the National Register in 1977. Typical of nominations from that time period very little information is provided by the available form. For example, only a very sketchy history is provided, revealing ownership by John Green (1732-1754 [Lachicotte indicates 1718-1750]), James Coachman (1754-1756 [Lachicotte indicates 1750-1754]), Susannah Man (1756-1841 [Lachicotte indicates 1754-1801; after which the property passed to her son, John Man, and subsequently Anna Maria Man]) and Dr. Francis Parker (1841-1912 [Lachicotte notes his death was in 1867]).

While I can find no slave schedule for Parker in 1850 (other than from his Charleston residence), the 1860 census indicates the plantation held 100 slaves. This was a substantial number of slaves and suggests that the plantation likely saw several deaths a year over its history. One historian who has focused on the rice growing regions of South Carolina estimates that between 55 and 66% of slave children born on rice plantations during the 19th century died before the age of 15 (Dusinberre 1996).



For this field assessment I briefly examined the maps and plats for the plantation that are readily accessible. Figure 2 shows four plans of the settlement. Structures in the slave settlement range from a low of seven shown on the 1938-1938 plan to 12 shown in the 1912 plat of the plantation. The 1911 soil survey and 1918 topographic map show an identical arrangement, probably because both took their details from the same survey sources. The 1938-39 plan is the first that shows structures situated behind those on the south side of the avenue. None of the plans, however, show the

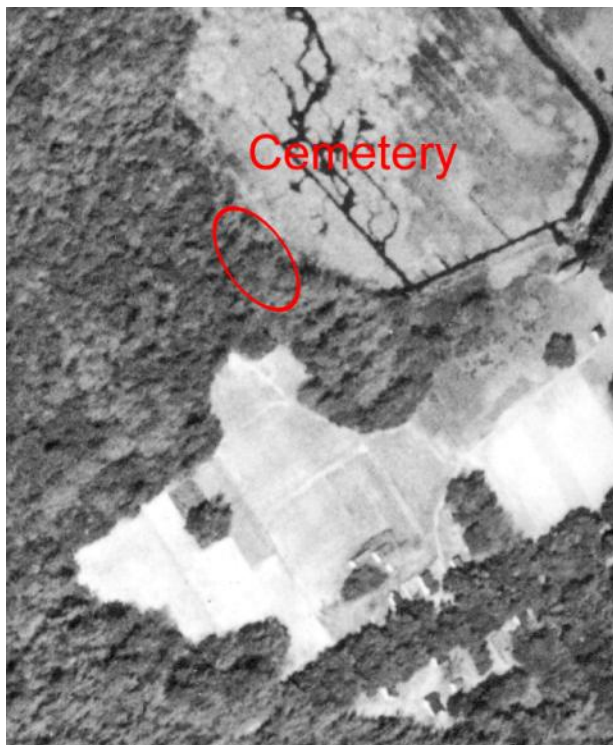


Figure 3. 1973 aerial of the cemetery area at Mansfield Plantation.

cemetery or provide any clue as to its existence. Of course this is not surprising and relatively few African American burial grounds are shown on maps from this period.

While aeriels are available from as early as 1939, the only one I had readily available for this part of Georgetown County was Figure 3, from March 1973 (45043-173-12). It fails to show any vegetation or features that would clearly define the cemetery. The trees appear to be mixed oak and pine and the area does not appear to have been logged as recently as other portions of the plantation, which by 1973 had been thinned.

Field Investigation

The cemetery was not immediately visible during my visit since the area is densely overgrown with yaupon holly, wisteria, briars, and other scrub in the understory, with an overstory of oak and pine. Careful inspection, however,

revealed both marked and unmarked graves. I am informed that there are about 200 graves in the cemetery – a figure that I am unable to confirm based on this brief visit. I did, however, identify at least nine marked graves with at least partial identifications. An additional four graves were present marked by unreadable funeral home markers and three more graves were marked only by rusted and almost invisible metal flower stands. All of these features were marked by surveyor pin flags. While I made no effort to count unmarked depressions, they are numerous, especially in the core of the cemetery where the marked graves were identified.

There is one grave dating prior to the Civil War. It reads, "In / Memory of / MARTHA MILLS, / Wife of / ALECK A. MILLS. / And Daughter of / Yorick & Elcey Ladson / Who died Feby 26th 1860 / Aged 28 Years. / Blessed are the pure in / heart for they shall / see God." A marble foot stone is marked "M.M. / 1860." The style of the marker is typical of those created by W.T. White, a Charleston stone cutter of the nineteenth century (Trinkley 1987:37-40).

I have been unable to identify any Aleck or Martha Mills or any Yorick or Elcey Ladson in Georgetown County during the late antebellum or early postbellum. The names are strongly suggestive of the individuals being African American, perhaps free



Figure 4. Marble headstone for Martha Mills.

persons of color, but the names do not appear in the 1850, 1860, or 1870 census records.

All of the other marked graves are far more recent, dating from the last half of the twentieth century. They include:

- Martha B[urege], Sept. 17, 192[5]
- Marion Legare, South Carolina, Pvt 180 Inf 45 Inf Div, Korea PH, July 12, 1927 – June 7, 1952
- Mrs. [] Bette West, Sept. 6, 1963, 19 yrs. Manigault [Funeral Home]
- Mrs. Kat[] []ateathers, March 63
- Rosa Lee [] Dennison, 4/16/1977, 1 day
- Addie Gilliard, 1910-1978, Fraser [Funeral Home]
- Albert Smith, 1908-1978, Manigault & Sons [Funeral Home]
- Samuel Gillard, 1902-1989, Manigault & Sons [Funeral Home]

Of these, the first two should be identifiable in the South Carolina death certificates since the certificates through 1955 have been released.

Martha Burege is certificate 15476 and this document reveals that she lived on Mansfield Plantation and died on September 16, 1925 of "general anasarea." Also known as "extreme generalized edema," this was widespread swelling usually associated with congestive cardiac failure, liver failure, or renal failure. She was 65 at her death was buried in the Mansfield Cemetery on September 17. The death certificate lists her occupation as housewife and he was widowed at the time of her death. We find that her father was Primus Hagel (or Hazel) and her mother was Binna.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
 Bureau of Vital Statistics
 State Board of Health

1. PLACE OF DEATH
 County of Georgetown
 Township of _____
 or Inc. Town of _____
 City of #3 Registration District No. 2402 Registered No. 15476

2. FULL NAME Martha Burege

3. SEX Female 4. COLOR OR RACE White 5. SINGLE Widowed 6. DATE OF DEATH Sept 16 19 25

7. AGE 65 8. OCCUPATION Housewife 9. BIRTHPLACE Georgetown

10. NAME OF FATHER Primus Hagel 11. BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER Georgetown 12. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER Binna 13. BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER Georgetown

14. THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE (Informant) Dr. H. A. Bell (Address) Georgetown

15. FILED Oct 1925 16. UNDERTAKER Manigault & Sons

17. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from Sept 14 19 25, to Sept 16 19 25, that I last saw her alive on Sept 14 19 25, and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at 10 A.M. The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows:
General anasarea
 Contributory (SECONDARY) Chronic Endocarditis & Nephritis

18. Where was disease contracted, if not at place of death? _____
 19. operation precede death? _____ Date of _____
 Was there an autopsy? _____
 What test confirmed diagnosis? _____ (Signed) Dr. H. A. Bell (Address) Georgetown
 *State the Disease causing death, or, in deaths from Violent Causes, state (1) Means of Injury; and (2) whether Accidental, Suicidal or Homicidal.
 20. DATE OF BURIAL Sept 17 19 25
 ADDRESS Manigault & Sons

Figure 5. Death Certificate for Martha Burege at Mansfield.

I have not been able to find a death certificate for Marion Legare, although he is listed in the Social Security Death Index, confirming the information concerning his death date. I have found his enlistment record, showing he enlisted on July 7, 1945 at Fort Jackson. His occupation was listed as an unskilled longshoreman and he had no dependents.

I did scan the death certificates for 1915 – the first year they were compulsory – and found one burial at Mansfield, a Hester Clothes who died on June 9 and was buried the following day (Death Certificate 11315). She was born in 1869 and her father was listed as Hessick Prolow, her mother was Cea. She appears to have moved to Georgetown from Mansfield about seven years prior to her death and was working in Georgetown as a housekeeper.

Scanning death certificates can not only identify additional burials in the Mansfield Cemetery, but the information can be used to help predict the total number of burials, at least during the twentieth century. For example, although Mansfield appeared only once in the 1915 death certificates, there were a number of burials at Chicora Plantation.



Figure 6. View of the Mansfield Cemetery looking east from the access road.

my visit I did observe a number of Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) plants in the cemetery area, as well as a single cedar. Mr. Fields reports that the cemetery is filled with daffodils (*Narcissus* sp.) and snowdrops (*Galanthus* sp.) during the spring. While the flowering bulbs are almost certainly intentional plantings used as memorials, Beautyberry grows in many environmental conditions from moist and shady to open and dry. It can often be found in pine stands, where it tolerates fire and is spread by animals that eat its berries. Nevertheless, I did notice that the Beautyberry seems limited to the

cemetery area and I did not observe it in the forest surrounding the cemetery.



Figure 7. Example of grave depressions in the Mansfield Cemetery.

graveyards found throughout the coastal counties. This is further confirmed by several quotes describing African American burial grounds.

African American cemeteries are also often found in densely wooded areas. There is no strong tradition among rural African Americans for maintaining graveyards, although some were cleaned yearly. In general, however, only enough of a graveyard was cleaned to allow the burial procession to enter and bury the deceased. Thus, the Mansfield Cemetery is typical of African American

For example, in 1866 John W. De Forest, a Union officer serving in the Freedmen's Bureau and stationed in Greenville, SC, commented, "Walking in a wood a mile or so from the village . . . I came upon a Negro cemetery at the times of slavery. A headstone of coarse white marble, five or six of brick, and forty or fifty wooden slabs, all grimed and mouldering with the dampness of the forest, constituted to sordid sepulchral pomps of the 'nameless people' " (De Forest 1948). Another account, while dating from 1923, describes an African American grave yard in the low country as "one of those ragged patches of live-oak and palmetto and brier tangle which throughout the Islands are a sign of graves within, -- graves scattered without symmetry, and often without head-stones or head-boards, or sticks, but invariably dug east and west, the head to the west."

A variety of grave goods have historically been associated with African American burials. There is no clear explanation for their presence, although there appear to be African antecedents. It is likely that while the meaning may be lost, there has historically been a strong association between these goods and traditional African American beliefs and practices. Today grave goods can be found in only a few of the most remote and difficult to reach African American burial grounds. Elsewhere the remains have been removed by white visitors, or have been "cleaned-up" by whites and blacks alike. It is possible that grave goods in many cemeteries are today buried, collapsing into graves and being covered by leaf litter and the gradual build-up of soil. No grave goods were found at Mansfield, although they may be present.

Boundaries

I was unable during my short visit to identify any definitive boundaries, except that I found no indication of the cemetery extending across the dirt access road to the southwest. Nor was I able to identify with certainty any burials beyond the fire plow line along the northeastern edge of the cemetery. What I observed was the relatively modern core of the cemetery, covering an area measuring perhaps 100 by 150 feet, with additional burials extending to cover an area perhaps 150 by 180 feet. This would account for perhaps 0.6 acre. This, however, is based largely on visible burials – those dating from the twentieth century that are still recognizable, as either marked or sunken graves.

Based on my experience I would expect the cemetery to be at least twice this size. This larger cemetery would encompass both modern graves and those dating back to the origin of the cemetery, which was likely during the development of the plantation.

Defining boundaries of an African American cemetery can be very difficult and can never rely on obvious indications – such as typically modern burials. Additional research, such as either a penetrometer study (using a device to examine ground compaction) or a ground penetrating radar examination may be undertaken, although the latter would be very difficult given the dense vegetation and numerous tree roots. Regardless, both techniques provide only general indications and it is often necessary to actually strip the upper foot of soil in order to explore for clearly defined grave shafts – a very costly and evasive activity. Currently the cemetery is marked with a buffer and this is likely adequate, unless some development activity is proposed.

Recommendations for the Cemetery

I offer several recommendations, some relating to further investigations, other relating to long-term preservation concerns. Each is briefly outlined below.

1. I recommend that the National Register boundaries be extended to include this cemetery and the cemetery is specifically mentioned in the National Register documentation. This would also provide an opportunity to update what is a very sketchy nomination. I realize that the property is currently protected; nevertheless my rationale for recommending this action is to ensure that the cemetery is identified as an important cultural component of the Mansfield Plantation.

This is a task that Chicora can accomplish, if you wish. The cost for updating the cemetery nomination, including additional historical research, would be about \$2,500.

2. The cleaning of the cemetery that is proposed is appropriate, but care should be taken to ensure that no burial evidence is damaged. During my visit I attempted to mark those items I recognized, but it is likely that additional metal funeral home plaques or metal flower stands will be encountered during cleaning – care should be taken to leave all of these items in-place. Vegetation such as briars and wisteria should be removed, as can trees under 2-inches dbh (except for cedars). I recommend, however, that the Beautyberry be left in place. Care should also be taken to disturb as little of the “duff” or leaf litter as possible, since there are known to be bulbs. All clearing should be by hand, with all debris removed from the cemetery by hand. It is especially important to prevent the cemetery from appearing “too” manicured or cared for. The cultural roots of the African American cemetery should be respected and the historic context of the cemetery retained.



Figure 8. Example of a wire flower holder showing how it blends into the underbrush and could be easily overlooked.

3. With the cemetery vegetation thinned, I recommend that the grave depressions, marked graves, and significant vegetation be mapped as a permanent record of the cemetery conditions. This is another task that we here at Chicora have done for a number of African American burial grounds. This cost would be about \$1,900.
4. Martha Reed should be contacted and asked to provide an oral history of her time on the plantation and, in particular, of events associated with the burial ground. Topics of particular interest include the names of those buried in the grave yard; whether all of these individuals lived on the plantation at one time; how an individual (or their family) might make the decision to be buried at Mansfield; how the grave site was chosen; whether the individuals buried there also have kin in the cemetery; whether the individuals buried there have kin buried elsewhere and, if so, why; how the grave site was cleared; who dug the grave; a description of various graveside services; did the family stay for the filling of the grave; were there ever any grave offerings left; did her parents or grandparents ever tell her any stories about the cemetery; how the funeral home was selected; and does she remember burials before funeral homes were used; are there others in the community that might remember burials at Mansfield. While the oral history account may be recorded with Ms. Reed’s permission, it is very important that it be transcribed since tape records have a finite, and short, life span. The written transcript should be curated at a local museum or library. This is a task that Chicora can accomplish and the cost would be \$900.
5. Although there has been no request for burials at Mansfield in recent memory, I recommend that the Board establish guidance in this matter. It would be far better to know the answer and never be asked, then to be asked and be unable to provide a sensitive and timely response.

6. African American cemeteries typically require extensive interpretation to be well understood by whites (who usually see them as overgrown and interpret that as meaning local blacks "don't care" and who see little to actually indicate that a cemetery is present). I don't know if there is interest in including the cemetery in the experience of your bed and breakfast patrons, but if so it will be necessary to provide a suitable interpretative framework. We have often used Table 1 to help students, attorneys, and others understand some of the basic differences between rural African American burial grounds and Euro-American graveyards or cemeteries.
7. Information can be obtained on twentieth century burials by scanning death certificates. This can increase the understanding of those who used the cemetery, as well as help project the total number of burials. One person can scan about four years a day, so this project would require about two weeks and the cost would be about \$2,200.

Table 1.
Comparison of Rural African American Burial Grounds to Euro-American Cemeteries

Traditional African American	Euro-American Cemetery
Lacks clear organization	Laid out in plots
Kin-based	Family-based
Overgrown, not tended except for a burial	Well tended, turf, formal appearance
Hidden in woods	Prominently placed
Originally in low areas, next to swamps, originally considered waste land	Prominent, top of hill, next to main house, often with a brick wall
Markers often impermanent, such as funeral home markers and wood	Common marker is commercial stone, permanent
Wide variety of markers, many non-traditional	Markers limited, traditional forms dominant the cemetery
"Always room for one more," graveyard is never closed	Finite space, limited number of burials possible, then cemetery closed
No sense of ownership, what is important is burial with kin, returning to place of ancestors	Plots are bought and sold as real estate, plots are owned like a house
Presence of grave goods historically, many "living memorials"	No grave goods (until very recently), plantings are limited to organized landscape

African American Slave Settlement

My time spent in the settlement examining the structures was limited, but I can comment on several aspects.

The first is that it is important to understand the different between "restoration" and "preservation." Simply put restoration is making an object like new, restoring it to some previous condition. In contrast, preservation seeks to limit deterioration, to stabilize an object.

All of the structures I observed clearly showed evidence of multiple renovation projects. Each building has been extensively altered. For example, each appears to have been added on-to several times. Several that I could examine through windows appear to contain a great deal of "new" material, with basic reorganization of living spaces and extensive reworking of the chimneys and hearths. At first



Figure 9. Mansfield slave cabins showing modifications. The first three photos show a variety of additions to the basic double pen slave cabin design. Note also reworking of the chimneys. The following three photos are all interior views showing historic hearths being reworked for coal or a stove. Both also suggest a new façade of brick against the original brickwork. All of the visible wood timbers appear to date from the twentieth century and represent interior partitioning and reworking of the floor plans.

glance it appears difficult to clearly determine what is historic fabric dating to ca. 1860 and what has been added since that time.

The deterioration of the remaining structures is severe and without near-term intervention the long-term preservation of these structures may be impossible. The work necessary to even stabilize these structures may not be available. Therefore, I strongly recommend that a team of an architectural historian and archaeologist examine each of these structures and prepare detailed notes, drawings, and photographs in order to document the historic core of these structures. While this is not an

inexpensive undertaking, it is certainly less costly than restoration – and it would serve to ensure that critical information is collected for future generations.

I also observed that archaeological remains were present on the ground all around these structures. Most of the materials appear to date from the second quarter of the nineteenth century, but there are likely earlier remains (and historic research may reveal the location of additional settlements; the 1860 census reveals that the plantation had 20 slave structures). The Mansfield Foundation may wish to consider some exploratory archaeological studies of the plantation – this may be something

that could be done in conjunction with a summer program for teachers.

Rice Mill Chimney

Although I was not specifically tasked with examining the rice mill chimney, when I observed it during my examination of the slave settlement I thought it was worth a closer inspection. What attracted my attention initially was what appeared to be a significant lean. I realize that this can sometimes be an optical illusion, so I hung a plumb bob on the chimney's north side at a height of about 6 feet above grade. I found that the chimney is out of plumb by about 4" over this 6' drop.

I also observed several cracks radiating up the chimney on the north side, with less significant cracks on the east, west, and south sides.

The chimney has also lost several courses of brick at the top, as seen in Figure 10.

There appears to have been several efforts at repointing. Figure 10 shows six repointed courses and additional pointing is found below this and in several other areas. While the



Figure 10. Rice mill chimney showing a serious lean.

mortar color match is unsatisfactory, the mortar application is generally good and the mortar appears to be relatively soft. However, there remain a number of heavily eroded joints that require attention.

There is also pointing around the fire box on the north elevation. This work is unsatisfactory. A very hard gray Portland cement mortar has been used. This mortar will lead to the deterioration of the surrounding brick and should be removed. In addition, the workmanship is sloppy and it disfigures this otherwise beautiful example.

It is relatively easy to provide specifications for repointing – and Chicora even does this work. However, prior to doing any further pointing, I strongly recommend that the chimney be evaluated by a structural engineer with experience in historic preservation activities. If the Mansfield Foundation



Figure 11. Example of bad pointing around the chimney firebox. This work should be removed and repointed once more critical structural issues are resolved.

does not have such an engineer at present, I am happy to recommend one that I know through his excellent reputation: David Fischetti with DCF Engineering, Inc. in Cary, North Carolina (919-467-3853).

A structural engineer can assess the probable cause of the lean, evaluate its severity, and most importantly, provide recommendations on corrective measures should they be necessary. In the meantime, I recommend that several crack gages be placed on the chimney to

allow the structural engineer to determine if there is active movement. One source is Preservation Resources Group (<http://www.prginc.com/Masonry/PRG-crackmon.html>).

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